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On Making Christianity Too Easy

The Churches Look at Themselves and the World

Our Far-Flung Enterprise

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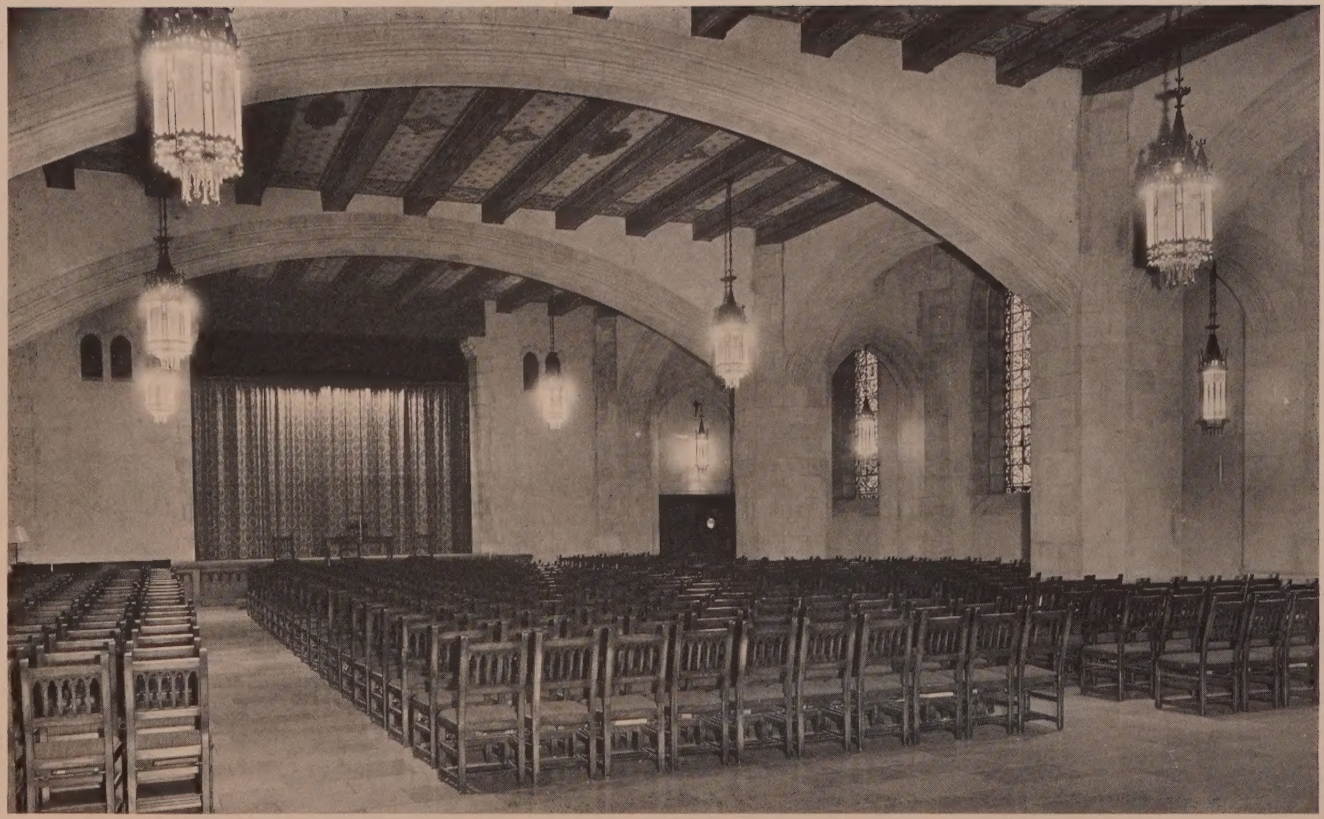

THE ASSEMBLY HALL

Used by the Men's Class for their Sunday morning sessions; for the Wednesday night meetings (see page 218); for social gatherings; and for dinners. The entrance to the main kitchen is through the door at the right front.

On Making Christianity Too Easy

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

One can think of many sermons easier to preach and more comfortable to listen to than this is going to be. But today we stand on the threshold of a week whose memories center in the cross, and the cross was not, is not, and never can be, easy or comfortable. Indeed, amid the many diverse meanings which Christians have seen in the cross there streams one central, practical, livable message, so personal to each of us that I should suppose it would strike home today through whatever divergencies of creed and church may be represented here: beware of making your Christianity too easy.

At first hearing, that may not seem to go far but, as a matter of fact, the history of Christianity could be written in terms of the ingenious and fatal ways in which Christians have tried to make their faith and practise easy. That is one of the major sources and greatest dangers in ritualism—it substitutes for downright daily moral seriousness and Christlike living external religious observances and ceremonies, and multitudes so have made their Christianity too easy. This also is the danger of creedalism. Believe this set of theological propositions, the dogmatists say, and you will be a Christian. That is too easy. To substitute acquiescence in a formal creed for the daring faith in God and man which led Christ to the cross is to put rubble in the place of marble and use cheap glass for diamonds. Such rehearsal of inherited opinions costs too little.

As a matter of history, therefore, the truth we are trying to state goes deep and reaches far. The tragedy of Christianity repeatedly has lain in the persistent, ingenious endeavor to make it costless. But that essentially ruins Christianity. The very charter of discipleship is difficult: "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Some of us so far are quite undisturbed by this statement. We are not ritualists or creedalists. Some of us now are looking on this matter from the outside. We ought not to be allowed to remain there. How cleverly we all contrive, each in his own way, to be Christians indeed—we should be sorry not to be Christians—but to make being a Christian too easy!

In the first place, some do that by a negative, moderate morality. We all are familiar with loose and liberal talking which reduces Christian living to mediocre levels. By being a Christian, some one says, I mean being a decent man, doing as well as you can, being a good citizen. Listen to Jesus: "What do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same?"

If this Holy Week is to mean anything morally serious to us, we had better start it with a good look at the cross. And what the cross says is that if this world, or any personal or social portion of it, is to be saved from its evil, somebody has to be needlessly good. That is, somebody must care deeply about human trouble and, not

being himself responsible for causing it or under necessity of doing anything about it, must voluntarily take it on himself. That superscription might well be written above the cross of Christ—"He took it on himself." Without that principle of action no great thing ever has been done on earth—voluntary, vicarious sacrifice, where some one, who did not need to, took a human problem on himself. Florence Nightingale did that for the wounded; John Howard for the prisoners; our mothers did that for us many a time; Christ did that for the world. That quality of spirit and mode of action exert the most tremendous moral, lifting power that the world has ever known, and if we are calling ourselves Christian without having a share in exercising it, we are making our Christianity too easy.

I suspect we are. I challenge our consciences with the accusation that we are. A Roman Catholic nun saw one of the girls she had helped to train throwing herself away in an illicit love affair. All efforts to dissuade the girl failed. Then the nun began flogging herself daily. Every day as that girl went on with her loose living she knew that her friend, the nun, alone in her cell, was flogging herself. That girl had to give in, for she found herself facing, until she no longer could endure it, the most tremendous moral force in the world.

Now, I can say as well as you that what that nun did is not literally reproducible in our lives, but I cannot escape the towering fact that being a Christian involves essentially that spirit—caring enough for persons and causes so that we sink our lives in them. If some one here shrinks back from this, as goodness too extreme, far beyond ordinary human capacity, I protest. Upon the contrary, at this very point Christianity faces today the severest competition it has to meet. One sometimes sees more of the cross outside the church than in it. What, for example, is the cause in this world for which more people are willing to die than for any other? Nationalism. Countless millions of people at their country's call, when sound the fife and drum, will go out literally to lay down their lives. What is the cause next in order for which people are willing to die? Radical, social revolution. If Christians as a whole were as willing to sacrifice life and property for their cause as Communists are for theirs, we could lift the world off its hinges. You see, at that very point where Christians talk the most, the cross, Christians face today their most serious competition from those who practise what they preach about the tremendous force of vicarious sacrifice.

Here in this church we must make this year a special appeal for benevolences, so as not to leave high and dry community philanthropies on which the happiness of hundreds of families depends. Now, I know all the excuses. The depression—I have heard of that, and in the face of that some of you have been so generous that I hope you will not take to yourselves what I am saying now. But I also know how some of the rest of us live, in what commodious circumstances our existence is set, and I venture that some of us have yet to learn the first elemental lessons of really sacrificial giving in the face of the most appalling human need this nation ever faced. Well, I take to myself this truth, all the way from the sacrificial use of what we have to the far deeper matter of sacrificially using what we are. Do you take it to yourself! We put the cross on the high altar of the church.

Too often we leave it there. It is very lonely there. That is not where the cross started. It started in the thick of real life—very tragically real. It wants to get back where it started, among the people, saying to us, Beware of making your Christianity too easy.

Again, some of us make our Christianity too easy by substituting for moral courage and devotion the spiritual experience and love of beauty. All the more freely one speaks of this in so lovely a church as we have built. For this church itself bears witness to the fact that we regard beauty as a gateway to the experience of God and rejoice in worship stimulated and enriched by symmetry and harmony and color. Only, if that is all there is to our Christianity, it is too easy.

I say this the more freely because personally I could not live without the use of beauty as a road to God. About the most incredible thing in atheism is that it must explain as an irrelevance, a fortuity, an accident, the beauty of the world. That simply will not do. Incredible religious creeds seem more credible than that. No wonder Browning said that just when we think we have gotten rid of God,

> . . . there's a sunset-touch,
> A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
> A chorus-ending from Euripides.

But if our Christianity is made up of sunset-touches and fancies from a flower-bell and chorus-endings from Euripides, it is too easy.

Clearly, Jesus would despise the mere esthete in religion, and all the more searching would be his condemnation because he himself was such a lover of beauty. Who was it told such perfect parables that one does not understand him if one does not see that he, too, was a very great artist? Who was it who told his disciples, considering the lilies of the field, to see that "even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"? He spent his last night in a garden to gather strength for his ordeal. Here is one more marvel of the Master, that he, who, alike in his appreciation and his creation of the beautiful, was an artist, was so much more besides. That one who, with so sensitive a spirit, moved up through beauty to see the face of God, should walk up to the cruel ugliness of the cross as though to say, This also is religion, to endure and dare for the kingdom of God on earth—that takes one's breath away.

Indeed, if he should hear us now talking about him as an artist, one can imagine what he might reply. Artist, he would say, very well, but if you are going to use that word about me go deep with it! Remember, he might say, what one of your own poets, Wordsworth, wrote about the meaning of being an artist:

> . . . that I should be, else sinning greatly,
> A dedicated Spirit.

That is the soul of a real artist, "a dedicated Spirit" laid hold on by a mastery which commands his life.

Some of you, I can imagine Jesus saying, are making your Christianity too easy. You build beautiful churches; you have glorious music; with loveliness you stimulate your souls to worship. So far, so good! I too loved the flowers, and when, swinging round the brow of Olivet, I saw the temple with its golden dome, I was moved to the depths. But to be a Christian is more than that.

My friends, it had better be more than that to us now. The world needs more than that. Wherever one looks—

whether one thinks of Tammany Hall here in New York, the revelations of whose corruption and cruelty go on week after week until one feels oneself looking, on Welfare Island now, into the very pit of hell; or whether one thinks of the shocking human tragedy of wide areas of our people; or whether one faces the insanity of the world's continued preparations for war in spite of all we ought to have learned in the years that just have passed—this is a soiled and desperate world, where a merely esthetic Christianity is of no more use than rose water.

Recall how Henry Ward Beecher put it: "Religion means work. Religion means work in a dirty world. Religion means peril; blows given, but blows taken as well. Religion means transformation. The world is to be cleaned by somebody; and you are not called of God if you are ashamed to scour and scrub." "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary"—yes, but after the uplift and refreshment of that, mops and pails and some unclean place to scour and scrub. Else we are making our Christianity too easy!

Again, some of us, especially we who are religious liberals, make our Christianity too easy by watering down and thinning out our faith. We have tried so to formulate our Christian ideas that they will be easy to believe and, so doing, we have reduced them to such attenuation that there is hardly anything left to believe at all, so that, of course, it is easy. This is the outstanding peril of modernism; let a modernist be the one to say so. The woods of liberal religion are full of people whose faith is so vague and indefinite that nothing could be easier than to believe it. That is the trouble with it—it costs nothing.

I suppose it was inevitable that multitudes of people should go through this process. They started with old theological ideas which it was impossible for them to retain, and in reaction they naturally sought for ideas which would be not impossible or difficult but simple and easy to accept. I went through that process; I sympathize with its necessity. We had to rid ourselves of incredible theologies which insulted our intelligence and made consent to Christianity either insincere or impossible.

Now, however, that we have done that, see where many have come out. They have ideas of God, the soul, and immortality so vague, indefinite, and simple to believe, that it makes little difference whether they believe them or not. They have made their Christianity too easy.

The faith in God and man which sent Christ to the cross had in it something wild, dangerous, and difficult. Such a faith need not insult one's intelligence, but it certainly is not easy. It is a tremendous experience to believe in God as Jesus did. We liberals in religion, who have specialized in stating Christianity so that it would be easy to accept, and who have accomplished in large part our negative task of sloughing off incredibilities, should face now in a new direction—toward the immensity, difficulty, and venturesomeness of this high faith which stakes its life on God.

What fools many of us Christians have been in comparison with the scientists! They too had old ideas to get rid of. They got rid of them. But they did not substitute for them vague indefiniteness, merely easy to believe or making little difference whether believed or not. Einstein's universe easy to believe! The world of quantum

physics easy to believe! The new science presents the most elaborate, complicated, difficult ideas of the cosmos ever held. The scientists do not say that it is easy. They say that it is magnificent, that it is tremendous, that it is on the road out toward the everlasting truth. We had better quit our obsession with easiness and rise to heights like that in our Christian thinking.

There is something wild about believing in the living God. It does fly in the face of superficial facts. It defies the plausibilities. A man who thinks it is simple does not know its meaning. A man who makes it easy is not really believing it at all. Against all that is dark and damnable in life, faith in God stakes everything on what is right and excellent as the revelation of the Ultimately Real. What is courage? Courage is adventuring life for a possibility, as Columbus did when he sailed west. What then is faith? Faith is believing that the possibility really exists. Such is the venturesome faith which carried Christ through the cross, and, as you see, while many words may be used in describing it,—it is tremendous, mountain moving—one word we may not use: easy. Ah, Christ on Calvary, to think that a whole generation of Christians should have spent so large a portion of their time trying to reduce your majestic and moving faith to easiness. Today sounds another call—Do not seek for something easy to believe; seek for something great to believe.

In one more popular way, some of us make our Christianity too easy: we restrict its application to the individual, personal life and keep it out of our social attitudes. Christ deals with the souls of men one by one, we say, with their inner needs and motives, and at that point we try to stop and not listen further to what Christ has to say about business, politics, race relationships, and war. One reason for so cooping up our Christianity within ourselves is that it is easy to do so. "My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine"—such individualistic religion can be sweet and gentle. It is the kind of Christianity which costs least. But to carry the principles of Christ out into this terrific world and claim for his ideas the right to dominate man's social life is to state Christianity and undertake to live it in its most difficult form.

I know I am talking to some of you here. You want to be Christians; you have caught some of the beauty of the Gospel in your personal characters, and you know that the Christian part of you is the best there is in you. But you do not really believe that the principles of Christ ever can dominate the economic and international relationships of men, and you are not thinking very hard or doing much to bring such a possibility to pass. That's the honest truth, isn't it? My friends, your individualistic Christianity is too easy.

Do you think Communism is more credible than Christ? I do not. The idea that all mankind will finally submit themselves to the suppressions and tyrannies involved in the methods of Russian Communism does not seem to me half so credible as that mankind might, at the long last, see the salvation which would come were our social relationships informed by Christ's principles of freedom and fraternity. Well, the Communists are not so excessively modest about their faith as many of us Christians are about ours. They do not say that Communism is merely an individual matter. They say they are going to conquer the world with it. You

see, they are beating us at our own game. They have more faith in the universal validity of what they stand for than millions of American Christians have in the universal validity of Christ and his right and power to inform and reconstruct the social life of man. That is our shame: We reduce our Christianity to a few inner attitudes. It is too easy.

If some one says that the application of Christian principles to social life would involve changes as deep and radical as Communism itself would involve, I cordially agree. When Christ gets through with us, our economic and international life, our racial relations, and our churches will be completely transformed. God speed the day! No humane man can watch millions of people cruelly hurt as they are now by the consequences of war and of economic maladjustment, without praying for deep-seated, far-reaching change. There is no use trying to dress up our present social order in any disguise that will make it seem tolerable. Every intelligent person must see that it is not tolerable. Even Little Red Riding Hood, when she saw the wolf dressed up as her grandmother, knew enough to cry, "What big teeth you have, Grandmother!" Millions of people in this country are saying that about our social order. Big teeth, indeed!

In this situation how futile our Christianity is if it has no faith in its own applicability to social questions! No, our international life is cursed in the very places where it is not Christian. Our economic life is bedeviled in the very places where it is not Christian. Many, calling me a modernist, say I do not really believe in Christ. Surely, some of the old theological formulas about him are incredible. But if this is faith in him, then I possess it: he has, and he alone, in his basic principles of life the true roadway into our personal and social salvation. "He that hath the Son hath the life," and that is just as true in international relationships as in personal character. Difficult to believe and practise that, does some one say? You are right, I should say it is! But anything else is too easy.

My friends, the most fascinating thing in Christianity has always been the cross. Why is that? Because in the long run we do not want an easy religion. We want a commanding, challenging religion that will take all we have and then call for more. That is the kind of religion we have in Christ.

Dr. Fosdick preached the foregoing sermon on March 25, 1934.

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Prayer

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Eternal God, before Whose greatness the souls of men must stand in awe and reverence, we worship Thee. In Thy hands are Orion and the Pleiades. The morning stars still sing before Thee. Grant unto us in Thy sanctuary that we may find Thee not alone a God of greatness but a God of grace. Thou vast sea of the Eternal, wide and unfathomable, let not our hearts be cast down and overawed before Thy greatness. Dost Thou not also leave our homely shores? Are not our trees and flowers nourished by Thy winds and rains? Is not the air we breathe made richer by Thy savor?

O Spirit of God, so be close to us, be approachable, accessible, not alone far off but near at hand. Invade us; interpenetrate our spirits; cast down the barricades that our unbelief and our reluctance raise against Thy coming; and in the deep secrets and intimate problems of our lives this day may Thy power be felt.

To that end we beseech Thee that Thou wilt take all unbrotherliness from us, for no soul can come before Thee except his brother be with him. It is our unkindness, our malice, our vindictiveness that keep us from prayer. The channels of our souls are choked, because we cannot forgive and we fail in love. We pray against all malice, all desires for vengeance, against the grudges that build walls between our souls and others. Send us out, we beseech Thee, from this place of prayer to be wellsprings of healing and goodwill in the homes where we live, among the friends we cherish, in the schools where we study or teach, in the churches where we worship, and in this human society so hurt by prejudice and hate.

Lift us into a new sense of life's meaning and dignity. Little are we, O God, and transient children of a day against the vast background of Thine eternity. Yet is this greatness ours that Thou canst be released through us into the world. Grant us this dignity. Make us the channels of Thy peace and kindliness, Thy power and grace to men. May we be open at the upper fountains of our lives. Let the Divine be released through us among men.

Walk Thou the inner corridors of our spirits. Open the secret closets there. See if there be any hidden, any evil ways in us. Make us honest with ourselves and Thee. May we dare to bring out into the revealing light of our prayer our uncertainties, our disappointments, our sins, our lovelessness, our secret ambitions, our hidden desires. Blow through us, Thou clean wind of God, and purify the spirits of Thy people. And if some soul is hard bestead with bereavement or temptation or anxiety, may the abundant resources of Thy grace and power be found of him in this Thy sanctuary.

In the spirit of Christ we pray. Amen.

Our Far-Flung Enterprise

By Grace H. Patton

Few nations of our day have been recipient of so much of the attention of the world, especially during recent years, as has been the little island empire of Japan. Great forces are at work in that land, some good and some evil. As goes Japan so goes, to a large extent, the future of the Far East. So it is greatly to be desired that the evil forces shall be overcome by the good. And for those of us who are convinced that Christ's way of life is the only satisfactory one for nations as well as individuals, the supreme wish for Japan is that she shall choose the better way. For that reason it is with a real sense of gratitude that we here in The Riverside Church realize that we can have a part in trying to help Japan toward the more desirable way and may, in a very definite way, extend to her some of the goodwill which we so earnestly hope may soon be found among all the nations of the earth. And this year, while the person who especially represents us in Japan is at home and here in our midst in New York, we consider to be a good time to make her and her work known not only to our own church constituency but to all who may be interested in the program of world friendship which she is trying to build up among the women and girls of that far-distant country.

Miss Mildred Roe graduated from Smith College in 1920, and in 1926 went to Japan, serving as foreign secretary under the auspices of the Y.W.C.A. but receiving her financial support from the Women's Bible Class of The Riverside Church. At the time she entered upon her activities out there, twenty-seven other "Y" secretaries were also engaged in similar work in Japan. Now she is the only one left! Due to the fact of greatly decreased budgets and to the evolution of increased national leadership, all the others have been recalled. So now we have the distinction of being the proud sponsors of the one and only Y.W. secretary sent from the United States! And we feel our privilege as well as our pride.

MISS MILDRED ROE

One who meets Miss Roe and be-

comes familiar with her marked vigor and her power of initiative, her cordial friendliness as well as her interest in everything that savors of sports and out-of-door life, has no difficulty in picturing her as an acceptable leader in any

gathering of girls, especially of the younger adolescent group who, with their youthful ardor and enthusiasm, turn so eagerly to the older woman who wins their loyalty and admiration. Under Miss Roe's guidance a group of the girls among whom she works in the city of Tokyo decided, a couple of years back, that they wanted to have not only their Club in the city but a place for recreation in the mountains. After finding, out in the region of Nogiri, a beautiful spot suited to their needs, they set to work and raised money and other necessary things for the kind of camp they had in mind. They themselves helped to build their lodge and set up their tents in the woods; and since then they have spent many happy and helpful hours in various group activities and in the companionship of free and easy camp life. They tent in the neighbor-

hood of the central lodge and spend a good deal of time in the out-of-doors, penetrating into the mystery of woods and streams, getting better acquainted with nature in all her varied manifestations, learning good health habits and achieving strong bodies through the vigorous out-of-door sports which constitute so much of their camp program. This means a step forward for the girls of Japan, for they have been accustomed to a sedentary life at home. The customary squatting position which generations of Japanese women have grown used to has been a factor in producing a race of rather diminutive stature. The girls who have been shut up in factories have also suffered from lack of proper exercise. But it is quite noticeable that the girls who are now engaging in sports under the new régime have grown straighter and taller. So if, in the future, Japan is known to produce a race of giants, persons like Miss Roe, who have helped to liberate the girlhood of Japan from physical limitations, will have the right to say, "I was one who helped to bring this about!"

The girls greatly enjoy their camp in the woods. They hike and swim, row boats, and play games. They also do their own housekeeping. They found, of course, that they could not engage in domestic duties or take part in sports while they were decked out in their very decorative but very impeditive kimonos; so they have evolved their own sports costume. They were the first to wear this sort of outfit, and they are much pleased with their utilitarian togs. They were the first to hold a regular field meet in Japan—and they are very proud of that also.

In Tokyo itself Miss Roe and her associates find much to do among the business and working girls of the great city. It is a well-known fact that Japan's increasing economic problem has led to a rapid industrialization of the whole country. Of course the center of this feverish industrial life is the large cities, and Tokyo is one big, busy industrial bee-hive. The girls of the cities have been victims of this speedy industrialization and, while it has freed them from certain restrictions, it has also exposed them to many dangers. They have been herded into large, crowded dormitories and have suffered the debilitating effect of long hours and unhealthy working conditions, to say nothing of the moral ills and the nervous strain to which they have been subjected. In such a state of affairs Miss Roe and the Japanese people who are collaborating with her find an excellent opportunity for friendly helpfulness and attempts at betterment. They keep themselves well informed on the working conditions in the factories and lose no chance to speed up improvement. They have clubs for the girls throughout the city, they visit in the homes, investigate the dormitories, and do everything in their power to make life happier and healthier for the factory girls of the city.

On a scale higher up we find the expert business women of the city and those engaged in professional callings. Japanese women have but recently entered these fields in large numbers and the situation there also demands friendly guidance and help. Such women are quite familiar with world conditions and they need to have the best spirit of America interpreted to them in a way that will help them to see how necessary it is for the welfare of the two nations, as well as for the progress of the whole world, that cordial relations should exist. Miss Roe and her coworkers are laboring to build up that

"bridge of peace" that shall eventuate in international and inter-racial appreciation and understanding. In cases where this has resulted in the Japanese women seeing the whole matter in the light of the teachings of Jesus, we get such an expression of Christian confidence and aspiration as is voiced in a message which some of the Y.W.C.A. girls sent to America—"We are not very strong or great in numbers, but through the Y.W.C.A. we want to have better understanding and sympathy and we like to become 'spans' in this bridge of peace, to sing in a loud voice, 'In Christ there is no East or West'—which is our vision."

The clearly defined aim of Miss Roe and those working with her is not to impose on the women of Japan Western ideas or methods, but to bring to pass among them a leadership shot through and through with Christian ideals. And we find the influence of those ideals impressively felt even where it is not openly displayed or made known. Non-Christian girls live alongside Christian girls in the easy camaraderie of camp and club life, and the permeating and uplifting influence of the Christ ideal is bound to bring results. It shows in varied and unexpected ways and places. For instance, one of the girls who came from a Shinto home, living and fellowshipping among Christian girls in the camp, was so impressed with the truths of Christ's teachings that she became a secret Christian, not letting her family or friends know anything about it. She led such a beautiful Christian life that, when she suddenly died, her family insisted on her having a Christian burial service, knowing that that was what would please her most. Such instances could be multiplied, and no one can estimate the results when the slow, penetrating influence of a Christ-like spirit of love and genuine goodwill takes its place in the thought-life of the Japanese women and young girls who will one day be the leaders among the women of their land.

Not long ago, at a gladsome get-together here in The Riverside Church of American women and representative women of nations all over the world, a note of real seriousness was sounded by a couple of Japanese students when they declared themselves emphatically opposed to war. One of them, speaking for herself and the others, said with unmistakable vehemence, "We don't want war. We don't want war! At least we women don't!" And we realize that it is just such friendship and goodwill as Miss Roe is building up by being "big sister" to a group of ardent, impressionable young girls, by interpreting America to the older and more mature women of Japan and entering into their lives with sympathy and understanding, that will, in the course of time, create such a spirit of fellowship between the two nations that war will be unthinkable. We look forward then with eagerness to the day when such a thing will have been accomplished, and, in the meantime, we receive with joy this message straight from Japan, from the people among whom Miss Roe lives and moves and has her being—"Miss Roe is doing an excellent piece of work. The Japanese appreciate her fine spirit and recognize her ability and her value to this work from her personal gifts, her training and experience."

Hearing this and knowing something of the character of the work needed there in Japan, we here in this church not only felicitate ourselves on having Miss Mildred Roe as our very own, but

(*Continued on page 219*)

The Churches Look at Themselves and the World

By C. Ivar Hellstrom

This would be news to many of the churches in whose behalf representatives met, talked, legislated and resolved back in May and June. For there is notoriously a wide gap between the proceedings of the national gatherings of the several Protestant denominations and the life and activity of the churches they are supposed to represent. However, it may be doubted whether this gap is more serious than that which exists between political representatives or the recognized spokesmen of labor and their constituencies.

In this church our sense of organizational relationship is somewhat attenuated. This is inevitable inasmuch as our membership has multiplied several times in the past few years and includes 929 who have a Baptist background and tradition, 366 Presbyterian, 209 Methodist, 162 Congregationalist, 95 Episcopalian, 153 representatives of 18 other ecclesiastical societies, and 430 who had no particular denominational affiliation. Some of these feel that they still belong to the denominations in which they grew up. Others are conscious of no religious fellowship between that represented by this church and "the Church" in its broad, loosely organized sense. We should be the more eager to sense the mind, the voice, the task, and the fellowship of the American Christian Church, as yet disembodied except as it lives in the traditional denominational organizations. For the permanent significance of almost all we are and do will depend largely upon whether we are an example of Protestant separatism carried toward a logical extreme of disintegration, or a highly individualized local group, with peculiar opportunities for the pioneering which must mark the reorganization of a church which may with some adequacy represent Christ in the new world already supplanting the "modern" world to which we were becoming accustomed. That is why the following summaries and comments, inadequate as they are, are presented here.

The reports of most of the annual conventions indicate a growing awareness of the necessity of reorganization both within and between the denominational agencies. The Northern Baptists, for instance, labored over the problem of reducing the number of boards through which they work and of united support for their denominational program. They also felt the call to line up more definitely in support of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. The Evangelical Synod and the Reformed Church in the U. S. A. worked out a merger. The Southern Methodists revived their committee on church union. On the other hand, the efforts of the Northern Baptists to reorganize were not entirely successful; the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. had to outlaw an Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions launched by some of its Fundamentalist leaders; the United

Presbyterian Church refused (by a tie vote) to unite with the above mentioned Presbyterians and still another Presbyterian group voted to continue outside the fellowship of the Federal Council of Churches.

While one welcomes any moves toward a more effective organization of Protestantism, there are certain questions that disturb and check one's enthusiasm. Aren't these moves, proposed or actual, already long over-due and proceeding at much too leisurely a pace? The overhead organization of Protestantism is obviously too heavy, inefficient, and costly beyond what the churches can and will support. It is trying to function in a world where changes so swift and fundamental are going on that words like crisis and revolution are becoming commonplace in our vocabulary. One wonders not only whether or not these efforts at reorganization and integration are overdue but whether they represent an intelligent advance movement toward significant goals, capable of arousing and sustaining enthusiasm, or whether they constitute rear-guard action, the forced yielding of spiritual inertia, cultural lag, and entrenched power.

The evidence that the churches are deeply stirred by the possibility of and preparations for international war is clear. For the most part their attitudes are expressed in the form of committee reports, resolutions, and declarations of faith which have been much more seriously considered than such pronouncements usually are. The characteristic action this year has been to recommend that individual members be given opportunity to sign a pledge not to participate in or support aggressive war or the invasion of the territory of another nation. Several groups took steps to secure for conscientious objectors among their young people the same exemptions from military drill as are accorded to Quakers. The convention of the Congregational-Christian Churches declared that it is "through with war" and it instructed its newly formed Council for Social Action to make it its first business to conduct a plebiscite whereby their members may express by ballot their attitudes with respect to participation in war.

There are evidences of some awareness of the anomaly that Army Chaplaincies create, of the question of support of conscientious objectors who suffer by taking positions they regard as Christian, of the necessity of doing something about military training in schools and colleges, of the problem of profits involved in war and in the threat of war and of the possibility that churches are deriving income from such sources.

The following is a summary of the report of the Social Service Committee of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. which was adopted by the Assembly:

(1) . . . it is incumbent upon all who profess the name of Christ to frown upon and disavow all that is a barrier to free and friendly intercourse between the races and nations of mankind;

(2) That Christians owe an allegiance to the kingdom of God that is superior to loyalty to their own country, . . .

(3) That Christians cannot give their support to war as a method of carrying on international conflict;

(4) That we are opposed to the increase of our naval and other war forces, . . .

(5) That we are opposed to military training, especially in our secondary schools and colleges, as tending to cultivate the war spirit and as distinctly anti-Christian in character, and further as a waste of the people's money. . . . It amounts to a public scandal that a nation should increase its expenditure for military training while ordi-

nary educational institutions cannot be maintained;

(6) We recognize that military policies have been the support of economic imperialism, and we condemn as godless any system of economics that requires war for its support and maintenance;

(7) We announce our support of all conscientious objectors to war, and we hereby demand in their behalf from all educational institutions requiring military training that such objectors be excused from classes in military instruction without loss in academic standing or official censure of any kind.

We direct the Board of Christian Education to record the signature of young people of our constituency who object to war on the grounds of their religion to a declaration to that effect, in order that their objection may be a matter of record and they may so receive the full support of the church;

(8) We urge upon the Congress and the President the necessity of making the requirements for citizenship compatible with the terms of the Pact of Paris, wherein the United States has contracted with other nations that it will not resort to war as a method of furthering its policies.

(9) In order to promote more friendly relations between our own and far eastern nations, we advocate the repeal of the exclusion act of 1924, and the admission of orientals on the quota basis now in effect with respect to other nations;

(10) As a practical means of preventing war, or, in the event of war breaking out between other nations, of preventing our own nation from becoming a combatant, the General Assembly directs its Board of Christian Education to make available to our pastors and other leaders blank pledges to the following declaration, a record of subscriptions to which shall be sent from time to time to the President and the Congress and a duplicate kept in the records of the Board:

"I will not cross the borders of any nation except in friendship, nor will I support my country in such action."

(11) We call the attention of the church to the sinister part played by the manufacturers and distributors of munitions of war, in rousing mutual fear and suspicion on the part of nations, and of overt acts promoting military rivalry. . . . We further advocate the abolition of the private manufacture and sale of munitions of war.

With regard to no other major social issue is there the same evidence of awareness, concern, conviction, or purpose to influence the course of events. Some of the pronouncements on social and economic questions are so general and platitudinous as to suggest that the churches are either pretty completely unaware of the basic forces that threaten all our Christian values in people and in institutions or else too bewildered or timid to afford any specific leadership in times like these. Of course, one has to remember that it took the churches twenty years after the World War to reach such convictions as they now express with regard to war and it is only five years since the financial collapse which threw a comparable searchlight upon the moral aspects of our economic system. In the light of this perhaps their inability to offer leadership in the present complex and explosive situation should not occasion too much surprise; but—well, it is disappointing.

At this point one cannot help wondering if these great ecclesiastical conventions really reflect the minds and hearts of the local church groups, their leaders and their membership in general. The deepest interest and most enthusiastic response seem usually to have been accorded to those speakers, reports, and resolutions which did say something challenging and tried to come to grips with the outstanding social problems of the day. Several of those upon whose reports of the conventions this article is based commented upon the disappointment and impatience on the part of many delegates at the failure of program-makers and convention officials to make it possible to deal more adequately with such issues. Some confirmation of this may be found in the decision of the Northern Baptists

to appoint a Committee of Nine to prepare for next spring a program dealing with international, social, and economic questions.

The Congregational-Christian churches did commit themselves definitely to lead the way in the perplexing field of ethical social-economic reconstruction. Their convention passed judgment upon the present economic order as one which "depends for its existence upon exploitation of one group by another, creates industrial and civil strife and international war, precipitates periods of unemployment, perpetuates insecurity and all its attendant miseries, and progressively curtails the cultural and educational opportunities of our people, thus destroying human values, moral, and spiritual." It registered its purpose to "set ourselves to work toward the abolition of the system responsible for these destructive elements in our common life by eliminating the system's habits, the legal forms which sustain it, and the moral ideals which justify it," "to seek the inauguration of a genuinely coöperative social economy, democratically planned to adjust production to consumption requirements, to modify or eliminate private ownership of the means of production or distribution wherever such ownership interferes with the social good." Declarations of this type have been made by several denominational committees and commissions; but these radical positions were endorsed not only by vote of a national convention but by the creation of a new board to see to it that their words should be more than a gesture. The new board, called the Council for Social Action, was given the same status as the two historic mission boards and $60,000 of their funds voted to enable it to get going. Its work may be of critical importance for American Protestantism. It may lead to a new crusade. It may bring a new alignment of the churches cutting across the traditional organizations. At the very least it should make possible a long step toward some clarification of the practical issues involved in the social struggle as has been done with regard to international war.

By and large the representatives of the churches have probably done as well as could be expected. Issues have to be fundamental and clear before there can be any consensus of opinion and unity of action. Furthermore, there are so many important matters to be dealt with in so short a time that hardly more than one or two can be dealt with at all adequately at a single meeting of these denominational groups.

Attention has shifted from the theological controversies which threatened the unity of several of the largest denominations a decade ago. The churches cannot agree theologically beyond the fact that they are not to be fundamentalist nor humanistic and now have more pressing problems. This may help account for the quiet after the storm caused by the challenge to rethink Missions. This may also account for the hesitancy to begin to think fundamentally about religious education, worship, and the mission (as distinct from Missions) of the church. In the face of the constant threat of war and of the possible collapse of our economic institutions, problems of ethical outlook and social purpose quite naturally are being given right of way.

Christianity's Stake in the Economic Situation

An objective study, under expert guidance, of the factors in our present economic disorder which vitally affect Christian faith and morals.

I

OCTOBER 10—*The Impact of Changing Economic Conditions on Christian Morals*

How new economic situations always have forced changes in Christianity's scale of ethical values; with an estimate of what is happening to our morals now.

Reinhold Niebuhr, D.D., Professor of Applied Christianity, Union Theological Seminary. Author of: "Reflections on the End of an Era," "Moral Man and Immoral Society."

II

OCTOBER 17—*The Miseducation of Our Children Under Present Economic Conditions*

How the moral and religious teaching of home, church, and school is commonly contradicted and defeated by our economic life.

George Counts, PH.D., Professor of Education, Teachers College. Author of: "Secondary Education and Industrialism," "The Theory of American Education."

III

OCTOBER 24—*Where Property Rights and Human Rights Conflict*

How the human interests of man and the acquisitive interests of property collide in our present economic disorder.

Henry Pratt Fairchild, PH.D., Professor of Sociology, New York University. Author of: "Outline of Applied Sociology," "Elements of Social Science," "The Foundations of Social Life."

IV

NOVEMBER 7—*Technology Waits to Give Abundance to All—What Holds It Back?*

Engineers could now supply affluence to everyone if what we know how to do were done for all: where does the trouble lie?

Walter Rautenstrauch, PH.D., Professor of Industrial Engineering, Columbia University. Author of important monographs on "Technology and Social Progress" and "Fundamentals of Social Planning."

V

NOVEMBER 14—*The Spiritual Results of Economic Security and Insecurity*

How security and insecurity of employment and livelihood affect human life; with an account of present measures to achieve security.

Frances Perkins, A.M., Secretary of Labor in the President's Cabinet. Author of: "A Social Experiment Under the Workmen's Compensation Jurisdiction," "People at Work."

VI

NOVEMBER 21—*The Social Consequences of the Profit Motive*

How the economic profit motive and the Christian service motive conflict in individuals and in society and what can be done about it.

F. Ernest Johnson, D.D., Professor of Education, Teachers College; Executive Secretary, Dept. of Research and Education, Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Author of: "Economics and the Good Life."

VII

DECEMBER 5—*Can We Solve the Economic Problem Without Sacrificing Liberty and Democracy?*

Can Democracy handle the problem of the stabilized economy; or is a Fascist or Communist government necessary?

Adolph A. Berle, Jr., A.M., City Chamberlain, N. Y. C., Associate Professor of Law, Columbia University. Author of: "Studies in the Law of Corporation Finance." Co-author of: "Modern Corporation and Private Property."

VIII

DECEMBER 12—*The Economic Situation as a Cause of War*

How the modern world's economic entanglements lead to international conflict; what can we do about it?

Bruce Bliven, A.B., Editor of *The New Republic;* Director, Foreign Policy Association.

These meetings will be held at 8 P. M. in the Assembly Hall. The public is welcome.

Church Night services will be held on October 31 and November 28, at which Dr. Fosdick will preside and speak.

WEDDINGS IN THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH

Our roster of weddings this past year includes 23 couples where one or the other or both of the contracting parties were members of The Riverside Church. (The member is named first.)

Robert D. Buchanan to Edna M. Lidstone
Katharine Jacobs to Thomas A. Morris
M. Elizabeth Squyer to Frank Henry Tschorn
Harold C. Montgomery to Frances Henning (both members)
Carolyn Jones to Samuel B. Williams, Jr.
Eunice Shaughnessy to George Paul Bischof
Vivien Kimber to Lee Gilbert
Cicely Foster to Gilbert Lucas
Margaret Schaffner to E. J. A. Tenbrinck
Stuart M. Babcock to Esther G. Morlock
Gordon C. Bradbury to Edna M. deJavannes
Elizabeth Janeway to Alexander N. Labounsky
Elisabeth S. Johnson to Robert C. Hume (both members)
Mary Emily Leary to Horace S. Peck
Mabel Lee Dodson to Leonard F. Requa, Jr.
Morton E. Oxley to Ruth F. McMeen
Charles W. Thompson to Eleanora Howell
Geraldine R. McAlpin to Jerome Pierce Webster
Marielouise Leipheimer to Herbert M. Butler (both members)
Elizabeth Stuart Buell to Arthur Marble (both members)
Dolores Brown to Sherwood Arnold (both members)
Constance Kimber to Lloyd Harding (both members)
Julia Arduino to Winfield Andras

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BELL MOODS

For rich and poor, for old and young,
For one and all alike;
From early morn, and all night long,
We mark the time,
And strike.

To call the people churchward bound,
For all to be on time;
With reverent and solemn sound,
To offer thanks,
We chime.

And for the fair, with song and dance,
With joy we start to swing;
To bring the people in a trance,
In joyous mood
We ring.

But when we sorrow for a friend,
A true and faithful soul;
Whose parting brings us grief no end,
In sympathy
We toll.

And when the sun is setting west,
And nature's beauties bring
A golden show'r of peace and rest;
With heart and soul
We sing.

—*Kamiel Lefévere*

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OUR FAR-FLUNG ENTERPRISE

(*Continued from page 213*)

we are more than thankful for this added opportunity which enables us to extend our parish far out beyond our own horizon and to help bring about the realization of that ideal for which this church and its leadership so pre-eminently stands—a warless world where mutual understanding and goodwill shall in all things prevail.

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WHEN ARE WE RELIGIOUS?

We have developed in this church a seven-day program. There is such a bewildering amount and variety of activity going on that few of us see it as a whole or in detail. What is the relationship between these activities and the purposes to which the church is dedicated?

In all churches carrying on or sponsoring such programs there is a tendency to think of formal services and pastoral work as religious and of the other activities as religious in a very different sense, often, as practically secular. This leads inevitably to a superficial conception of religion and of the church. It tends to destroy the fundamental reasons for the church engaging in many of these activities at all.

The lines can no longer be sharply drawn between activities that are secular and those that are religious, between the field of the churches and that of other institutions. Nor can it be drawn as it has been in the past. That does not mean that the former are not based on realities nor that they are unimportant. It means that all who exercise leadership or have any voice in the conduct of our activities must think more clearly as to what we here shall interpret as religion and as the church. We must consider the spiritual significance of what we are doing rather than the ways and means by which we are doing them.

So let us, in the spirit of Christ, not only continue our traditional church activity but also launch again our classes in Arts and Crafts, our Dramatic groups, our Orchestra, our Recreational programs, our more distinctly educational and social service activities to the glory of God and the realization of His kingdom among men everywhere.

C. I. H.

Handbook of the Institution and Its Building

This book deals with the institution and its program, the building, its architecture and symbolism, the details of the stained glass windows and of the carved stone being identified. It is a book of 127 pages, including 59 reproductions of photographs of the structure. In make-up and typography the book is one which you will wish to have in your possession and keep as a souvenir of the church. It is for sale at the Literature Table on Sunday mornings and in the vestibule throughout the week.

It usually sells for $1.00 a copy but the Trustees have authorized us to sell 1,000 at 50c a copy plus fifteen cents if you ask to have it mailed.